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AUTHOR Kuykendall, Crystal
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ABSTRACT

This handbook is written to give groups of parents and citizens the insight and basic tools they need to develop their leadership potential. The four chapters focus on leadership styles, strategies of a leader, group functions, and motivation. Because the development of leadership is so closely related to organizing for action, this handbook should be used as a companion to "Parents Organizing to Improve Schools." (Author/IRT)

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A PARENTS' NETWORK
Publication of
THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR CITIZENS IN EDUCATION
COLUMBIA, MARYLAND

NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR CITIZENS IN EDUCATION

The National Committee for Citizens in Education is a non-profit, tax-exempt membership organization dedicated to increasing citizen involvement in the affairs of the nation's public schools. NCCE is a successor to the National Committee for Support of the Public Schools founded in 1962 by Agnes Meyer, Harry Truman and others. The original organization concentrated on increased federal assistance to public education. In 1973 the Committee was reorganized, took its new name and reconstituted its purpose. Since then NCCE:

- Published a major report, *Children, Parents and School Records,* which received national attention in Parade Magazine, Time Magazine, The New York Times and on ABC Television.
- Supplied vital information which was incorporated in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, which became law November, 1974.
- Conducted hearings across the United States on who controls America's public schools, taking testimony from hundreds of individuals and organizations.
- Joined with other national organizations to convene a National Conference of Title I Parents.
- Convened the first national meeting of active local parent groups held since 1910.
- Established the first public-interest, toll-free telephone hotline, 800-NET-WORK, to help parents get rapid information and help
- Established *The Parents' Network,* to mobilize citizens for action to improve our nation's public schools, and to support existing local parent-citizen groups.
- Established the Citizens' Training Institute which trains parents and citizens in ways that will enable them to work more effectively in schools.
- Established NETWORK, a newspaper for parents about schools.

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PREFACE

Crystal Kuykendall, the author of *Developing Leadership for Parent/Citizen Groups*, is Director of the National Committee for Citizens in Education Citizens' Training Institute, a position that daily puts to the tough test of soundness and useability her deep convictions about the importance of local level leadership in solving the problems that beset our schools. She has been an Intern in Education for the public schools of the District of Columbia; a Ford Fellow and has taught at the college level. Trained in government, sociology and education, she brings to her work not only a disciplined way of looking at problems affecting parents and children but also the important elements of sensitivity and insight.

We are proud to add this important handbook to the growing list of materials especially developed for parents and citizens.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This handbook was developed with the assistance of a group of people who operate daily at the local level and are confronted with the problems of developing and working with parent leadership. Among them are the members of the NCCE Citizens' Training Institute Field Staff—William Anderson, Pat Daly, Cheryl Francis, Carmen Goodman, Carol Harris, Kathleen Kennedy, David Spencer and Greg Villegas—and the CTI's trainers and consultants—Columbus Salley, Lee Pugh, Carl McCall, Carl Swell, Noel Day, Nick Frasure, Milton Ogle, Preston Wilcox and Greg Sims.

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Nancy Gross' editorial skills continue to play an important part in the readability and useability of the handbooks in this series.

Errors and omissions are the responsibility of the author and The National Committee for Citizens in Education.

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INTRODUCTION

Every parent who wants to see the public schools improved knows two things: that the job is a tough one under any circumstances and that it's just about impossible without a plan of action and a group of people who can really get things done. The National Committee For Citizens in Education has already published *Parents Organizing to Improve Schools*—a booklet designed to help you organize a group and get it working. The booklet you hold in your hands is designed to help you develop the leadership you will need to carry out your plans.

The task we're going to be talking about is not an easy one. But it is absolutely vital. It is almost impossible for an organization to survive for any period of time without the contributions of people who are willing and able to pull—and keep—the group together. It takes people to give an organization meaning, life and duration. It takes leaders to make people effective.

I've seen the truth of this practically every time I've gone back to a city where the NCCE held hearings on School Governance a few years ago. In practically every case where the former "leader" had left, the problems were still severe and the group was either ineffective or had disintegrated. Part of the reason the problems persisted is the resistance of the system to any change. But another part—which also accounts for the sorry condition of the group—is that the original leadership had not done its job properly. It had not developed the kind of leadership a group must have to fight successfully over time.

Understandably, many parents have little long-range interest in school problems. They are concerned only about crises and the immediate problems that affect their children. But short-term commitments and victories will not produce the changes that are necessary to make the schools more respon-

sive to children's needs. If we are to deal with causes, rather than symptoms, we must have long-term leadership—leadership that builds groups which have stability over time. Such leadership, which serves the group rather than individuals, is the best possible resource for solving the basic problems in our schools.

That's the very first lesson. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR PARENT GROUPS IS BOTH A NECESSITY AND A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT. If your group hasn't resolved any problems, or hasn't made any significant changes, you need better leadership development. Even if you *have* been successful, but have some doubts about your ability to last, it's time to put more energy into the development of leadership—in yourself and other group members. That's the only insurance you can have of achieving long-term success.

WHAT THIS HANDBOOK CAN GIVE YOU:

There are no gimmicks to the development of leadership. There's no recipe which will guarantee it and I've never seen anyone develop leadership with a cookbook approach. This handbook is written simply to give you the insight and the basic tools you'll need if you are to develop the leadership potential in yourself *and* the leadership potential in others. That second point is particularly important. All too often groups fail even though their leaders and officers know how to keep the group focussed. The problem is that they do *not* know how to develop the leadership potential of the entire group. And that's the essence of true leadership ability.

Because the development of leadership is so closely related to organizing for action, this handbook should be used as a companion to NCCE's *Parents Organizing to Improve Schools*. Your efforts to strengthen your group and satisfy your objectives will be most successful if you apply the skills discussed in both brochures. There may even be some overlap between them. But that can't be helped: the two subjects are intimately connected with one another.

The Leadership Quiz at the back of this handbook will help you to measure your abilities and

your successes. Just remember while reading—leadership is *not* developed overnight, nor are school problems resolved in a few days. Both take time and energy. But when leadership is properly developed, energies are less likely to be wasted, problems are more likely to be resolved sooner, and groups are likely to feel better about their ability to make the schools work.

IF YOU ANSWER TRUE TO THESE QUESTIONS, YOU'RE CONFUSED ABOUT LEADERSHIP . . . .

(1) Leadership is the ability to fight and win.

(2) Leadership is assuming total responsibility for group success.

(3) Leadership means being tough and aggressive.

(4) Leadership always rests exclusively in the group president.

(5) Leadership is the ability to intimidate the opposition.

(6) Leadership comes with winning an election to group office.

(7) Leadership rests with people who are mature and older.

(8) Leadership rests only with people who have natural charisma.

(9) Leadership is the ability to win without compromising your position.

(10) Leadership is being smart enough to develop action plans when it's obvious you'll be successful.

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CHAPTER 1
STYLES OF LEADERSHIP

Ask people to describe a leader, and the answer is often given in terms of an office or a title. Yet to say that a person is a leader because he or she holds a particular office does not really define what a leader is, or why leaders are so important. Nor is the other common answer much more helpful. That's the one that refers to qualities. "A leader is courageous," people will say. Or "a leader is assertive." It's very easy to think of leaders as those with commanding personalities or those with natural charisma, and to talk about such people as "born leaders." But the fact remains that leadership *style* is far more important than personality in creating an effective leader and that under some circumstances the "born leader" can actually do more harm to a group than good. What makes someone a leader is neither personality nor title, but the ability to work for and within a group and to develop a group process that will lead to the fulfillment of the group's goals. *A leader is, in other words, a person who makes a significant contribution to the continuing life and long-term effectiveness of the group with which he or she* is associated.*

Just as there are many personality types in leadership positions, so there are many styles of leadership. But four predominate. Let's analyze each, in order to get a better handle on leadership—what it is, what it should be, and how it can best be developed and used.

*Hereafter, for the sake of convenience, "she" will be used to mean both he and she.

THE SELF-CENTERED LEADER

This is the person who, as a result of ego drives or other personal urges, actively seeks a position of leadership, often in the hope that it will be a stepping stone to some other position of prominence in the community. Often she has such a strong personality that she can, with little or no effort, arouse a very special kind of loyalty and enthusiasm in others. But although she may be perceived as an "inspiration," her motives have much less to do with the group than with her own needs: the adoration she evokes is her guarantee that she will achieve the personal gain and advantage she is looking for. Such a person usually seeks praise and is likely to dominate others. Titles and other evidence of importance mean a great deal to her, and she usually manages to acquire them.

It is frequently difficult to tell when an individual has a hidden agenda, or some secret motivation for seeking a position of leadership. Many times, selfishness isn't detected until it's too late—until others are completely fed up with the annoying personality and the group has started to fall apart. So it's important to be on the lookout for this kind of person. Self-centered leaders are, unfortunately, extremely common. You may have one in your midst already. You may even *be* one. If you're in a leadership position, only you know your motives for taking on responsibility, and only you can do what's necessary to develop an approach to leadership designed to help the group, and not you as an individual.

But although self-centered leaders frequently create problems, they *can* bring certain short-range benefits to the group:

(1) They are work horses and will usually see a task through to the end.

(2) Their visibility and prominence can give the entire group recognition and notice.

(3) They have the ability to motivate others to perform even if they don't develop the leadership potential these people have.

(4) They accept responsibility for many group projects.

These are not trivial benefits. If they are used properly, self-centered leaders can be important assets.

On the other hand, if you are interested in leadership for the long haul, you must recognize the problems self-centered leaders bring with them:

(1) The "committee of one" approach does not permit other, less aggressive parents to make their best contribution to the group's success.

(2) An extremely visible group leader can create bad feeling about the entire group if she receives bad publicity.

(3) If reprisals, adverse publicity or personal problems cause her to weaken, the entire group is likely to fall.

(4) Because others in the group have to fight to have some voice in the decision-making process, power struggles are likely to develop and the group may split into cliques.

(5) The self-centered leader usually uses her charisma for self-serving purposes. Any benefit the group derives is only incidental.

(6) When such a leader moves on—to another organization or another town—the entire group is likely to disintegrate.

Used properly, a self-centered leader can be very helpful. She is likely to be an effective spokesperson and an excellent public speaker. But any group that follows such a person blindly is looking for trouble. Despite her strong personality and highly developed sense of duty, the self-centered leader can harm, rather than help the group in the long run.

THE RESPONSIBILITY HOARDER

For as long as the members of organizations or communities believe that they *need* someone to guide them, there will be responsibility hoarders: people who unselfishly give of their time and energy for the benefit of the group. The responsibility hoarder cares that the group makes it, and she works tirelessly to pull things together. But because the members of the group see her as a messiah, and permit her to bear *major* responsibility for group success, she impedes long-term progress.

Unlike the self-centered leader, the responsibility hoarder does not see her leadership position as one of personal gain or as a stepping stone to greater prominence. Her loyalty is to her group and her cause. Moreover, she is very efficient in assuming responsibility and getting the job done. Like her self-centered counterpart, she is a work-horse. But she's also unassuming. Her mission is one of service and she's most content when she's working for the good of others. There are numerous responsibility hoarders in parent groups today, not only as members but as office holders, and the groups with which they are associated feel blessed to have them in their midst. They are, indeed, admirable leaders in any number of respects:

(1) Their ability to inspire others often leads to short-range victories for the group.

(2) Because they are unselfish, few people want to compete with them. Power struggles are, therefore, unlikely to develop.

(3) Their visibility and the respect with which they are viewed by the community give visibility and respect to the group's efforts.

(4) They are usually excellent fund-raisers.

But with all their virtues, responsibility hoarders do *not* provide the kind of leadership that groups need if they are to achieve long-range success:

(1) Because of the hero-worship with which they are regarded, other group members fail to recognize their own potential for leadership and, as a consequence, their leadership abilities are not developed.

(2) Because the group depends so heavily on the responsibility hoarder, her weaknesses are also the group's: when she fails, it does, too.

(3) Those who want to minimize the group's effectiveness can often do it by singling her out and concentrating their efforts in reprisals here.

(4) She is likely to run out of steam: no one can go on forever carrying the burden of success for an entire group.

Groups that fall apart when their leader leaves or is disabled have usually been under the spell of a responsibility hoarder. If you think your group relies on you just a little too much, let it function without you for a few meetings. If it cannot, you've

failed in your *real* responsibility—perhaps because you've been a responsibility hoarder. Remember, the essence of leadership is the ability to develop others *while* you're developing yourself.

THE INFORMATIONALIST

Some people naturally seek out information. They're curious; they attend all the school board meetings, the workshops, conferences and parent gatherings. They're persistent, too—and they usually know just about everything there is to be known about school affairs and issues and about local and national educational developments. These people have a real knack for keeping abreast of things, and they enjoy the satisfaction they get from having information at their fingertips.

Such people can be tremendous assets to any group. The problem arises when the informationalist achieves a leadership position, because she has *all* the information. That's the way she'd like to keep it.

Obviously, it's not healthy for a group to be lacking information with which to work. But when information is held by one person and is not shared with the group, it's really just as bad. The informationalist can manipulate the entire group process simply by having information that others feel themselves unable to obtain. She then becomes the only person the group can depend on in a crisis.

When informationalists hoard information, the group as a whole does not develop. Members should share information freely. After all, what's more important—the group process (and effectiveness) or one person's advantage in being able to control? The best way to use the informationalist's very considerable talent is to encourage her both to research information for the benefit of the group *and* to help develop the information gathering ability of others. These are real services, and they provide real leadership.

The informationalist can help the group in other ways:

(1) Because she is so knowledgeable about school affairs, she usually makes an excellent spokesperson in presenting group concerns to school officials.

(2) Although she likes to keep her knowledge a secret, the knowledge she is willing to share can be used to help the group deal with short-term crises.

(3) In the very act of expanding her own knowledge of the school process, the informationalist herself usually grows and develops as a person.

(4) She can be very helpful in developing good strategy and alternatives when the group is working on a plan of action.

But, over the long haul, the informationalist's impulse to hoard what she knows can cripple the group process:

(1) When information is not shared, the development of strategy rests on one person's ability to put all information in the proper perspective and use it wisely. Group knowledge affords the chance for better strategy development because it puts everyone's creative genius to use.

(2) If the informationalist becomes the group's spokesperson or leader, she becomes vulnerable to reprisals and negative propaganda and the information network can be completely cut off.

(3) Individuals make mistakes. When information is not shared, the informationalist runs the risk of defeating group purposes by making costly errors which group effort could avoid.

(4) When information is hoarded, the morale of the whole group suffers and hostility and cliques may develop.

All three types of leaders discussed above have one thing in common: whether by their own design or the group's need for hero worship, they function more as individuals than as team members — therein lies the danger they present to the continued life of the group. For as long as they are permitted—or even encouraged—to keep control of the group in their own hands, they—as individuals—hold the key to the success or failure of the organization as a whole. Whatever happens to them happens to the entire group. Despite their best intentions, they may be vulnerable to cooptation—to the privileges and favors officials may offer in order to pull them to the other side—or to reprisals, often on their children.

THE DEMOCRATIC LEADER

This is the kind of leader every parent activist should hope to become—a leader who motivates, inspires and coordinates the activities of the group, to create maximum involvement by every member. The democratic leader understands that the group's success is of primary importance and that only a strong group effort will bring about problem resolution. A strong group can minimize individual frustration by supplying a real system of mutual support. The democratic leader understands this and accepts her responsibility to the group by developing *both* her own leadership potential and the leadership potential of other group members. She keeps the group together through sympathetic planning and action and makes certain everyone contributes what he or she can to the group process.

The democratic leader is as tireless as the responsibility hoarder but different in that she is not singled out as the messiah. She *is* important to the group, but she is not critical to its success or longevity. She's not necessarily as charismatic as the self-centered leader: she may even be one of the most modest members of the group. But she has strength—strength that stems from her commitment to *group* growth and development and the resulting ability of its members to promote change.

The democratic leader sees leadership as a process for change—one that involves shared control, shared responsibility and a shared sense of satisfaction. She seeks to hold the group together and takes the necessary steps to maintain cohesion and avoid fragmentation. Her major concern is to keep the group functioning as a whole. This is the type of leadership *you* want to develop—in yourself and in the members of your group.

Whatever her role or position, the democratic leader is the real leader of the group. Once she understands the task that must be done, she accepts her role in meeting it. Further, she realizes that if the organization is to be effective, everyone has a role to play, and she makes everyone aware of this. As a consequence, everyone else becomes more willing to contribute what she can and in the process

develops her own leadership capabilities. Some people feel that groups have trouble when there are "too many leaders." This is true—but only when there are too many self-centered leaders and too many selfish personalities. There can never be too many democratic leaders.

The democratic leader is action-oriented. She develops the people in her group by building morale and fighting apathy. She increases the group's ability to win by developing a sense of timing and negotiation. She knows the real benefits of united action and seeks to develop a power base with the collaboration and support of other parent networks. Democratic leaders respect the opinion of everyone in problem solving and action planning. They make an effort to think through all alternatives for action and they listen attentively to everyone's suggestions. They don't feel it necessary to impose their wills on others, but seek to develop everyone's ability to contribute original ideas to the group.

Even though the person who has the greatest knack for holding the group together usually emerges as the president, the democratic leader may, under certain circumstances, decide to decline any office in order to assist others and develop hidden potential. This does not mean that she downgrades her own ability. On the contrary. She recognizes it and contributes her thoughts, ideas and expertise freely. She continues to develop herself but she also understands that the development of others is an integral part of leadership. The democratic leader, unlike the self-centered leader or the responsibility hoarder, *wants* to delegate responsibility and authority to other group members. She understands that many parents in the group are there only because of special concerns relating to their own children, and she makes it her business to fight for their immediate interests. But at the same time she gets them to look beyond the immediate pay-off. If, for example, a group of parents becomes angry because of the suspension of their children, she works tirelessly to get due process, and to get the children reinstated. But she also tries to channel their parents' emotional energies into a long-term effort to change the school policy about suspension and expulsion.

Indeed, this is one of the major goals of all effective leadership: to tie every short-term victory to a long-range plan for policy change. For without long-range change, the same problems will surface time and time again, and new groups of parents will have to deal, each time, with the old problems. Only democratic leadership can assure steady progress towards long-range goals.

Just as a leader cannot be defined in terms of title or personality, so leadership cannot be defined in those terms. For leadership is not a person. It is a quality—the ability to motivate, direct and inspire others to reach group goals and satisfy group interests. LEADERSHIP IS THE SERIES OF ACTIONS OR OPERATIONS WHICH HELP THE GROUP TOWARDS ITS DESIRED ENDS. IT IS THE ART OF BRINGING CHANGE ABOUT—A PROCESS THAT PEOPLE USE TO REACH THEIR OBJECTIVES AND REALIZE THEIR GOALS. If you've confused leadership with a person and you're waiting for that certain someone to come along and make everything just right for your organization, your wait may be very long. Moreover, you're unlikely to find that your problems have been solved if and when that person appears. For, as we've seen, leaders who function as individuals rather than members of the group cannot, in the long run, coordinate group efforts and maintain a collective operation with shared responsibilities. If change does not take place, if problems are not resolved, if there is no movement and united effort, there is no leadership—no matter how many work-horses there are in the group.

WHAT CREATES LEADERSHIP?

As soon as someone reaches the conclusion that conditions can (and should) improve, that person is ready to develop the skills that can bring those improvements about. When people experience a conflict between what they want and what actually exists, they are ready to take the initiative to work for change and to develop their own leadership potential. Are there many parents in your community who are dissatisfied? Did they join your group to improve things? Each angry and dissatisfied parent is a potential leader.

Leadership can also emerge when people feel that the things they hold most dear are in jeopardy. For example, when children's learning suffers and they seem to have no desire to learn, when the system produces consistently lower achievement scores and drop-outs, you'll find many parents ready to work toward improvement and to organize for action. And the more parents who become involved, the more leaders—and leadership—can emerge.

If you don't like the idea of a group process—if you still feel it's necessary to have one central figure in complete control, you're probably not ready for the challenge of achieving long-term success. For it takes *groups*, not individuals, to change the schools.

HAVE YOU ACCEPTED THE CHALLENGE BEFORE YOU? YOU HAVEN'T IF YOU HAVEN'T ANSWERED YES TO THESE STATEMENTS:

(1) I joined this group to improve schools for all children.

(2) I am ready for the demands of group membership.

(3) I am ready to put forth the necessary effort to win and be successful over time.

(4) If being successful means changing my attitude, taking some initiative and accepting burdens, I am ready.

(5) I am prepared for risks.

(6) It's not enough to just identify with a group —I want to be an active force.

(7) I am prepared to take the time necessary to develop my leadership potential and my organizing talents.

(8) I am so committed that school officials will not be able to manipulate or co-opt me.

(9) I want the group to be successful not because of what it means for me, but what it means in the long run for education.

(10) My children and the children of others are worth this pain.

CHAPTER 2

BEING A LEADER

If you're seriously committed to community involvement and to the improvement of your school, you should be just as serious about accepting the challenge of developing your leadership potential.

For, regardless of your official or unofficial position in your group—whether you're an office holder, a chairperson, or a caring parent—you *do* have a role to play in bringing success to your organization. The challenge before you is to beat the odds—to make the contribution necessary both to help children and to develop the potential leadership that's already there—in YOU.

Once you've accepted that challenge, you're ready to work with other group members to develop a strategy that will enable all of you to work together towards the success you want. Three points are of special importance in developing strategy:

(1) Assessing where you are as a group.
(2) Timing your actions for success.
(3) Building a base of power.

ASSESSING WHERE YOU ARE AS A GROUP

Either alone or with other members of your group, brainstorm possible causes of present conditions in your school community. Remember, you can't bring about change without knowing what changes need to be made. A good beginning is to look at the following:

(A) Where you are in relation to where you've been:

- Have parents in this community been successfully involved before?
- Have teachers or other school personnel dominated parent groups?

- What has been the nature of parent involvement? (Do parents make curriculum decisions or concentrate on benefit programs and fund raising?)
- What kind of issues have parents concerned themselves with?

(B) The attitude of the community towards the schools and parents:

- Do people tend to blame the schools or parents for problems?
- Does your school community support school programs?
- Do those who can afford it send their children to private schools?
- What have the politicians done to improve your schools?
- Are school taxes and bond issues voted through or defeated?

(C) Who controls the decisions about schools?

- Parents?
- Teachers?
- The union?
- School administrators?
- The board?
- The rich?
- The business community?
- The mayor?
- People who live outside the district?

TIMING YOUR ACTIONS FOR SUCCESS

Being a good leader means making certain that poor timing doesn't defeat your purposes. That means giving yourself enough time to plan your involvement in school issues. Only that way can you be sure you will be able to have an impact on the eventual decision. If you expect to concentrate on a specific aspect of the school process—the budget, perhaps, or collective bargaining—your planning should start at least a year in advance.

Poor timing can easily lead to defeat. As you doubtless know if your group usually waits for a situation to reach crisis proportions before taking action. It is almost impossible to develop an action plan while tensions are high. Start looking for the warning signs of such problems as school violence*, student dissatisfaction, and school deterioration

*See *Violence In Our Schools*, an NCCE publication.

early. Analyze previous crises: how and why did they develop? Think of potential problems and ways to avoid them. Ask students for their insights on the small problems that may erupt into big ones in the future.

Sometimes good timing means adapting temporarily to the *status quo*. If, for example, one of your objectives is the dismissal of a particular school official, and you haven't got the necessary community support, you'd be wise to hold off any action until the mood of the community changes, and to use the time until then to speed up that change of mood by an information campaign.

In developing good timing, be sure that you and your group know:

(A) When to compromise.
(B) When to be assertive.
(C) When to be quiet.
(D) When to vote on group concerns.
(E) When to be militant or low-key.

(A) When to Compromise—Give a Little, Win a Lot

The old saying, "If you compromise, you never win," can destroy you. For it simply isn't true. Compromise may involve making concessions, but as long as you compromise practices rather than principles, it is often the first step towards winning your goal.

Suppose, for example, that you've achieved the first step in making a change in a bad school policy: a school official has agreed to sit down with you and discuss some of your demands. Then it would be wise to halt—at least temporarily—the action that brought the agreement about. If, when you sit down to negotiate, you find the official unwilling to address your issues, the time has come to resume your original activity. It's always important to know how much you can push without jeopardizing your chances of winning. A rule of thumb is to compromise a little when you see some bending, and then to escalate with newer tactics later on. And always remember that it's a good idea to ask for things in priority fashion, so that you can give up less important things first.

(B) When to be Assertive

You can afford to be assertive in your dealings with school officials when:

(1) You've done your homework.
(2) You have the facts.
(3) You know you're right.
(4) You have the evidence with you.

Don't be shy or timid when officials deny statements you know you can prove to be true. And try to stick with facts. Guesses can always be denied.

(C) When to Be Quiet

Listening is learning. Learn to keep quiet in discussions both within the group and with school officials when:

(1) Others in the group are talking.
(2) You've already made your contribution and others have yet to speak.
(3) You don't have all the facts.
(4) You've presented a logical, persuasive argument. Your silence gives others a chance to digest what's been said before responding.
(5) You know you're exaggerating to pad an emotional argument.

(D) When to Vote on Group Concerns

Many of the decisions the group takes will involve serious risks. It is, therefore, important to hold off voting on them until all alternatives have been discussed and a consensus has been reached. Negotiations and discussions in-house may involve emotional displays, but they are much to be preferred to a decision that divides the group. You want unity and the time you take to cultivate it will bring you big dividends later on.

Do not take a vote unless those who have conflicting views are present. You want to *encourage* verbal exchange—and the resulting unity—not avoid it. If you railroad a decision through, you are sowing the seeds of future disunity.

(E) When to be Militant or Low-Key

A certain amount of forceful action is necessary to overcome odds. But confrontation tactics and destructive behavior in your dealings with school officials can sometimes result in counteraction

which can bring about crippling set-backs. You can be assertive when you know you're right, but before plunging into hostile behavior—

(1) *Know* who you're dealing with and:
- What is their history in dealing with parent groups?
- Where were they before they came to this job?
- What strategy do they respond to most?

(2) *Understand* why you've reached a bottleneck.

(3) *Make certain* you've analyzed the situation.

(4) *Make certain* your group has agreed on strategy.

A sense of frustration can easily lead to destructive behavior. Your opponents are likely to know this and refuse to become intimidated no matter what you do. There's nothing wrong with being angry and demanding, but don't let hostility keep you from being effective.

It's best to be low-key when you're dealing with militant opposition. A strong, articulate, unemotional, low-key leader is far more effective in facing hostile, emotional opposition than is a vocal, angry one. Unless you have the entire school community behind you, it is far better to work behind the scenes to get information than to battle such opposition head on. After evaluating the situation and personalities you'll be dealing with, plan your roles and the course of action to be taken by each member of your group, It is often a good idea to act out the various roles in a role-play during one of your meetings.

As a leader, you want to get positive results and you want to get and keep the support of your community. Bad propaganda about you or your group can weaken and even destroy your efforts. But so can counter-productive action on your part. By avoiding costly displays of emotion, you're likely to develop more effective tactics and to increase your esteem within the community. Don't forget: school officials will usually remain calm. Be sure you do, too!

BUILDING A POWER BASE

All too often parents have a sense of powerlessness—they don't really feel they can make a dent in school decisions or do anything to help their children. And all too often they let petty differences of opinion with other parents thwart their efforts to build a base of power from which all parents can work. The effective power groups have not fallen into this trap: by identifying the common thread that binds them together, they have overcome differences in ideology, role and strategy. Teachers, administrators, elected officials and private educational groups have established powerful national unions and associations by recognizing the need to *unite* their efforts even when they disagree on some matters.

Table 1 will help you understand the things that give people power. As you will see, parents have a number of important assets. But, as you will also see, parents themselves often thwart their potential strength.

HERE ARE SIX TIPS THAT WILL HELP YOU GAIN AND KEEP POWER:

(1) develop more understanding of the system of communication

(2) create an effective, well-disciplined organization

(3) identify common problems and establish common goals with other groups

(4) actively seek financial resources

(5) concentrate on the development of legal strategies*

(6) become a part of the local/state political decision making by registering and creating voting blocs.

In building a base of power, *it will help if you know the politics of your state legislature and the legislative forces that favor or oppose your goals.*

A 1974 national survey of state legislation and the policies and perspectives of state departments

*Knowing more about the law in your state will help you if your group is embarking on a campaign involving school finance or collective bargaining.

of education** asked the following questions:

a) Does there now exist any state legislation requiring or recommending parent involvement in any school activities or affairs?
b) Does the state agency have any policies or regulations specifically regarding parent involvement?
   (1) in the classroom
   (2) in the local school
   (3) on the advisory committees
   (4) on district salary committees
   (5) in curriculum development
   (6) in principal selection
   (7) in budget determinations
   (8) in school design
   (9) in teacher contract negotiations
c) In teacher preparation and certifying activities, are there any specific competencies identified which address themselves to work with parents?
d) Is there any office or person in the State Education Agency to whom responsibility has been delegated for studying/facilitating parent involvement?

The answers to these questions are summarized in Table 2 (page 28) on a state-by-state basis. If the answer for your state is "yes," make sure you know *what* the legislation is, *what* the policies or regulations are (and whether they are being monitored or enforced), *what* competencies are identified (and *how* they are identified), and *where* the responsibility for parent involvement lies. If the answer is "no," find out why and work toward the establishment of a better policy. Share your findings with other parent groups—deal collectively with the problems. You can be a major factor in seeing to it that state laws are enforced and improved.

Being a leader involves both self-development and group development. The next two chapters will help you develop your leadership style by giving you additional insight on developing your group and motivating more member leaders.

**Conducted by Daniel Safran, Director, The Center for the Study of Parent Involvement, February, 1974. Findings are published in *State Education Agencies and Parent Involvement.* To get a copy contact the Center for The Study of Parent Involvement, 2544 Etna St., Berkeley, CA.

WITH THIS POTENTIAL

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REASONS FOR THE POWER OF SCHOOL OFFICIALS*	THE POTENTIAL POWER PARENTS HAVE
(1) membership	(1) numbers
(2) money	(2) voters
(3) discipline	(3) school monitors
(4) leadership	(4) leadership
(5) organizational expertise	(5) expertise
(6) lobbying capabilities	(6) proximity to the schools and to educators
(7) political clout	(7) money (once a real effort is made to raise money)
(8) patronage	
(9) contracts	
(10) prestige	
(11) staff resources	

*This includes Teacher Unions, School Boards, and the entire School establishment.

- ARE WE POWERLESS?

e 1

REASONS PARENT POWER IS THWARTED

(1) ineffective use of time by parent organizations
(2) lack of information
(3) lack of communication
(4) lack of discipline
(5) lack of unity
(6) lack of persistence
(7) lack of cooperative organizational efforts
(8) lack of direction
(9) lack of short- and long-range planning
(10) inability to identify problems and set priorities
(11) inability to work with parents whose involvement may be on a different level
(12) lack of money**

**See NCCE publication, *Fund Raising by Parent Citizen Groups*.

Table 2
PARENT INVOLVEMENT

State	Legislation	State Policies	Competencies	Personnel
Alabama	No	No	No	No
Alaska	No	No	No	No
Arizona	Form not completed			
Arkansas	No	Yes	No	Yes
California	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colorado	Yes	Yes	No	No
Connecticut	No	No	No	No Answer
Delaware	No	No	No	No
Florida	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Georgia	No	No	No	No
Hawaii	Yes**	Yes	No	No
Idaho	No	No	No	Yes
Illinois	No	No*	No	Yes
Indiana	Yes	No	No	No
Iowa	No	Yes	No	No
Kansas	No	No*	No	No
Kentucky	No	No	No	No
Louisiana	Yes	Yes	No	No
Maine	No	No	No	No
Maryland	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Massachusetts	No	Yes	No	Yes
Michigan	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Minnesota	No	No	No	No
Mississippi	No	No	No	No
Missouri	No	No	No	No
Montana	Form	No	not completed	
Nebraska	No	No	No	No
Nevada	Yes	Yes	No	No Answer
New Hampshire	Yes	Yes	No	No
New Jersey	No	No	No Answer	Yes
New Mexico	No		No	Yes
New York	No Response			
North Carolina	No	No	Yes	Yes
North Dakota	No	No	No	No
Ohio	No Response			
Oklahoma	Yes	Yes	No Answer	No
Oregon	No	No	No	No
Pennsylvania	No	No	Yes	No
Rhode Island	Yes	Yes*	No	No
South Carolina	No	No	No	No
South Dakota	No*	No	No	Yes
Tennessee	Yes	No	No	Yes*
Texas	No	Yes*	No Answer*	No*
Utah	No	No	No	Yes
Vermont	No	Yes	No	Yes
Virginia	No	Yes	No	No
Washington	No	Yes	No	No
West Virginia	No	No	No	No
Wisconsin	Yes	Form not completed		
Wyoming	No	No	No	Yes

*See State-by-State Summary
**Legislation Pending

IF YOU CAN'T WATCH OUT FOR THE FOLLOWING, YOU AREN'T READY TO MAKE YOUR GROUP WORK:

(1) Sloppy planning of parent meetings.
(2) Improper use of emotion.
(3) Manipulation of members.
(4) Getting the "run around" when seeking information.
(5) Inaccurately evaluating the group action process.
(6) Lack of follow-through.
(7) Lack of responsibility.
(8) Lack of a base of support/coalitions.
(9) Ineffective use of members.
(10) Fragmentation.

CHAPTER 3

MAKING YOUR GROUP WORK

As a leader, you should do all you can to make yours a model group. Not only will everyone feel better about things, but you'll find more people joining your efforts. This chapter will focus on the things you must watch out for if you are to make your group work.

TIPS FOR PLANNING MEETINGS

All too often, parent groups ignore a major reality: many parents have restraints on their time which may prevent them from taking part in important meetings. To assure maximum attendance, the following factors should be taken into account in planning your meetings:

1. **Babysitting:** You should develop a plan to deal with child care. You may be able to arrange for older children to volunteer their babysitting services. If not, plan ways to accommodate small children at your meeting place.

2. **Meeting Time:** Plan your meetings at times convenient for families. Remember, many parents need time for meal preparation, after-meal cleanup and going-to-bed activities with children.

3. **Meeting Place:** Be sure to consider not only the geographical location, but also whether the place you've chosen is one in which parents will feel comfortable. Many parents don't like the idea of meeting at the school; some prefer a less formal setting.

4. **Travel:** Make sure you get members with cars to help transport parents who need assistance.

MAKING THE BEST USE OF EMOTION

Action, we know, is the best remedy for apathy. But you must be careful not to waste precious time and energy in action that has no purpose. When your action is not carefully directed, it becomes non-productive and, in the long run, self-defeating. One of the greatest threats to effective action is time and energy wasted in complaining. If your members joined to improve things—and not to gripe—then their emotions must be used to *guide* that improvement, not to thwart it.

1. **In-House Differences:** Earlier, it was mentioned that it's best to get people to air their differences before any decision for group action is taken. But there is a difference between a stormy session and a temper tantrum. When people are angered by a group decision, make certain the group understands why. If personal jealousies trigger temper tantrums, third-party intervention may be helpful. "Familyhood" sessions, in which people can discuss their disagreements and irritations, will help your group avoid the tension that can destroy it. Constructive criticism will help avoid the backbiting and jealousy that come when individuals belittle each other's efforts.

2. **Emotional Outbursts:** Parents often become emotional when the security of their children is threatened. But, emotion is not always effective in dealing with the school establishment. Let your calmest members serve as spokespersons in dealing with officials, and ask the ones who are likely to become emotional to do their work backstage, by gathering the information needed to support your cause.

AVOIDING MEMBER MANIPULATION

Even the best action plan can be destroyed if group members are manipulated. And those who would like to slow you down or defeat you are al-

most sure to try manipulating you by such techniques as trying to convince your members that they're hurting rather than helping school conditions. As a leader you should:

(1) Make every possible effort to establish allegiance to your group objectives in everyone. Parents who are determined to win are less likely to quit or slow down. Also, parents who feel they are part of a successful group are not likely to betray you.

(2) Stress the benefits of a strong *group* effort.

(3) Equip each member with facts about the system. Facts will give you the ammunition you need to keep your eyes on victory and off manipulative deterrents.

(4) Be on the lookout for "do-gooders"—either those who don't feel the schools are at fault or those who are still reluctant to take risks. Too many groups are weakened by smiling advocates who hurt the group effort by discouraging members from taking action. You can convert these people from liabilities to assets by involving them in an information-gathering project with which one of your strongest members is associated.

(5) Improve your knowledge base. This will keep fast-talking school officials from using status, denials and buck-passing to keep you at bay. "We're handling everything; there's no need for your activity," is one of the oldest tricks in the game. If you let such maneuvers stall you, they'll defeat your purposes every time. You must learn to avoid the runaround when seeking familiar information from school officials.

Information is power—and just as power must be taken rather than given, so, in most cases, must information. Although many school officials want to share information with parents, others make determined efforts to withhold it or make it so hard to get that parents eventually give up. Getting the information you need to build your power requires persistence, persistence and more persistence.

Below is a list of replies frequently used to keep information from parents.* You should be prepared to deal with all of them.

(a) "We will have you investigated"—*Threats and intimidation.*

(b) "United we stand"—*Organized resistance.*

(c) "The information may be harmful and misinterpreted"—*Professional paternalism.*

(d) "You can get it elsewhere"—*The dodge.*

(e) "Come and get it"—*The invitation.*

(f) "Tell us why you want it first"—*Limited rights.*

(g) "The law doesn't apply to me"—*The exceptionalist argument.*

(h) "It's too much trouble"—*Administrative burden.*

(i) "Your request is too vague"—*Contrived confusion.*

(j) "$3.00 per page, please"—*The sting.*

(k) "Maybe they'll go away"—*The stall.*

(l) "So sue me"—*The dare.*

(m) "....."—*Stonewalling.*

*From Massachusetts Advocacy Center "States Report—Freedom of Information in Massachusetts," Boston, Mass., March 1975, page 7.

EVALUATING YOUR GROUP PROGRESS

It is your responsibility as a leader to analyze your actions and results thoroughly. The fact that you've won some victories doesn't necessarily mean that you were doing things right. Perhaps you were just lucky; perhaps time or outside events were on your side. Understanding the reasons for success and failure will help you make and keep a good track record, will improve your standing in the community and will prevent the group from disintegrating after a few crisis victories have been won.

Go back over all the things you did—or even thought about doing—as you developed and implemented your strategy and see what impact each had on the eventual outcome. Be sure to ask yourselves the following questions:

(1) Did most members take initiative or did they leave the big jobs up to someone else?
(2) Did most complete their tasks without being coached or goaded?
(3) Do members share their gains and frustrations with one another?
(4) Has excitement about winning developed in everyone?
(5) Is advice freely given and accepted?

Successful action should make the members of your group feel better about one another and about the group process. It should also bring the group additional support and new members. If these things haven't happened in your group, something is wrong with your leadership, and it's time to devote more energy to individual and group development.

AVOIDING THE IMPEDIMENTS TO EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Persistence is a necessity if your leadership is to be effective and your group is to succeed. But it is not enough. Five dangers can do you in, if you aren't careful:

(1) **Lack of Follow-Through:** Don't defeat yourself before you really get started. Don't sit and worry about the odds. There are many battles you won't win immediately. But you won't win

any at all if you don't understand that your job is to deliver—even when things seem to be at a standstill.

If you're involved in negotiations with school officials, use the time between meetings to make things happen:

(a) Keep the pressure on—don't let officials forget or lose sight of your demands.

(b) Keep people informed—make certain everyone knows what stage negotiations are in. And use personal contact and telephone trees rather than flyers or letters.

(c) Hold meetings and rallies—keep everyone's spirit alive and keep your base of support solid.

(d) Urge people to go to all school meetings—this will help maintain inspiration and allegiance. Help people get to meetings by working out travel and child care strategies.

(e) Work on getting the support of sympathetic teachers, board members, school officials, and politicians—and let others know about the support you have.

(f) Set up a media campaign.

(g) Stay aboveboard in talking about those you're negotiating with—you'll seriously jeopardize your support if you stoop to underhanded tactics.

(h) Put everyone to work in getting more information so you can increase your activities and be prepared for the next meeting.

(2) **Lack of Collective Responsibility:** Mutual trust, interdependence, broad-based membership and shared responsibility—these are the hallmarks of an effective, democratic organization. As a leader, it's up to you to strive for such a group—one in which there is a maximum participation in both action and conflict resolution.

(3) **Lack of Support/Coalitions:** Powerful support systems can unite your group and give you momentum. They are absolutely necessary if you are to build a power base. Coalitions with other parent groups will strengthen yours by:

(a) Keeping you from re-inventing the wheel—(repeating mistakes others have made).

(b) Informing you about successful strategies used in other schools or cities.

(c) Making you feel better about your frustrations—(you really aren't alone).

(d) Involving you in issues other than those that originally motivated you.

(e) Giving all of you the added power of unity.

If you think that the differences between your group and other parent groups are too great to permit linkages or coalitions, a little further thought will show you how many similar goals you actually have. If you're having trouble reaching other groups because of competition for members, recognition and power, remember *there are no permanent friends or enemies—only permanent interests.* Power struggles with other groups will harm both of you. You increase your power as parents by uniting.

There are many ways you can reach other groups:

(a) Learn to respect and appreciate differences—assess the barriers between you.

(b) Arrange to meet periodically to discuss your common goals and apparent differences—in that order.

(c) Discuss why you need each other—you really do, you know.

(d) Distribute information on your group to others.

(e) Publicize parent and student activities so other parents can become aware of what you are doing.

(4) **Ineffective Use of Members:** Your effectiveness as a group can be destroyed by members who don't follow through on their tasks and, consequently, force one or two people to spread themselves so thin that insufficient attention is given to specific group endeavors. Don't dilute your gains and strengths by failing to put the right people and the right task together.

(5) **Fragmentation:** When the group is unable to reach a consensus on strategy, planning and action, cliques, jealously, backbiting and waste are likely to result. Often self-centered leaders promote fragmentation because their styles don't permit them to give adequate respect to the ability and potential of others. If you have not developed the habit of airing differences and feelings

in your familyhood sessions, your group runs a serious risk of fragmenting and even disintegrating.

A few final tips:

- Resolve group conflicts. (And remember: conflicts are least likely to develop when objectives are developed cooperatively.)
- Build on the strengths each person has and the contributions each can make.
- Establish a procedure for decision-making but do not make the final decision yourself.
- Don't waste your members' time by making them feel *less* involved than you.
- Help your group establish goals and priorities by analyzing the community and the previous efforts of other groups.
- Make fund raising a cooperative endeavor.
- Don't try to do everything yourself. Delegate responsibility.
- Make certain you take time to listen to other members' ideas and comments.

Remember: The greatest contribution you can make towards developing an effective group is developing its members. Everyone has leadership potential. If you develop yourself and fail to develop others, your group won't get very far.

IF YOU CAN'T DO THE FOLLOWING, YOU'RE NOT READY TO MOTIVATE AND DEVELOP LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL IN OTHERS . . .

(1) Make the best use of your workers.

(2) Share with other parents the kind of information that encourages their support.

(3) Conduct open meetings where everyone feels important.

(4) Instill respect and appreciation for all parents in your members.

(5) Understand the reasons for parent apathy and reluctance to become involved.

(6) Recognize the real worth and potential contribution ALL parents can make.

(7) Ring door bells, make telephone calls and have eye-to-eye contact with parents.

(8) Plan activities which will make parents feel GOOD about their involvement with you.

(9) Listen and learn with and from others.

(10) Clarify parents' roles and responsibilities.

CHAPTER 4

MOTIVATING OTHERS

We know that dissatisfaction with school conditions and concern about their children's education motivates many parents to join our groups. But what about those parents who don't seem to respond to anything—who simply don't appear to care? How can you penetrate this kind of apathy and involve parents who have never been involved before? How can you keep parents involved whose children are no longer in your school? In short, how do you develop the leadership potential of parents who seem, at first glance, to have little leadership potential?

HOW TO USE YOUR MEMBERS MOST EFFECTIVELY

The first thing to understand is that you don't need *all* of your parents to bring about the changes you want to see. Too many parent groups wait around for 50% of the school community or at least 25% of the group membership to show up at meetings before taking any kind of action or lament when only eight out of 40 members show up at a council meeting. You do not need 100% involvement to be effective.

The people who belong to groups fall into two categories—workers, who perform the day-to-day functions; and supporters, who usually respond only in crisis situations. The rule of thumb in organizing for change is that you need only 5 to 10 percent of your total membership as workers. If you can effectively motivate and inspire this number, you have the forces that you need to turn the system around. Any parent who comes to meetings regu-

larly has given you strong evidence that she *wants* to make a significant contribution and that she *can* be a productive worker. It's up to you to make the most of her presence and of her desire and ability even when it is not verbally expressed.

Those parents who surface every now and then—who come out to emergency meetings, or take an interest when their child is threatened—are supporters—they can be called upon for specific responsibilities at specific times. They can serve on a telephone tree; attend meetings where certain kinds of representation is needed; provide baby-sitting services, and other emergency functions for your group. Moreover, supporters *can* eventually be turned into workers. Never give them an inferior status and always keep them informed of your plans and progress. Invite them to *all* your meetings. You may have to make a special effort to motivate them—to bring them to realize that school conditions can—and should—change. Ask them if they're satisfied with the school situation as it is and give them the facts about the things that are wrong with it. Don't be annoyed if they do not respond immediately. Perhaps they have been defeated before. Perhaps they're not convinced of your sincerity. They probably feel powerless. Maybe they have watched too many other groups fade away as the active leaders were victimized by repression and reprisal. These are very legitimate reasons for not becoming involved. Do not ignore these fears or belittle parents for their reluctance. Respect their hesitation and concentrate on making them aware of the changes they would like to see. If they are convinced that these changes can be accomplished, they will support your efforts once your group has gained momentum, and will join you as you become more successful.

Telephone contacts, door-to-door efforts, school activities for parents, church gatherings, discussions with students—all of these will aid your efforts to reach as many parents as possible. But not only should you try to reach a maximum number, you should make an effort to cut across age, race, class and ethnic lines. Younger parents have as much energy and enthusiasm to contribute as older par-

ents have wisdom. If your group is dominated by any one race, religion, ethnic group or age bracket, you must put forth an extra effort to recruit parents of different backgrounds. You need community representation at all levels if you are to be successful.

HOW TO RESPOND TO EXCUSES FOR NON-INVOLVEMENT

Many parents will take part only in activities in which they feel safe—activities that don't involve risks. Below is a list of some typical comments parents make when they do not want to become involved and a list of responses that may help them change their minds:

COMMENT: **My child is doing okay. He's a model student and the teachers love him. There's no reason for me to be involved.**

RESPONSE: But if other children are suffering as a consequence of poor school services, how can he not *be affected? It's just a matter of time before damage is done to him—either directly or indirectly. Your involvement now can help prevent him from being turned off by a school official who might later deny him his rights. What's more, in joining us you're not only preventing things from going sour for your child. One of the children you help may be your future son or daughter-in-law!*

COMMENT: **My child has already been in a number of schools. Every time I speak out too much or get too bold, they pick on him more. No thanks, I've learned my lesson.**

RESPONSE: They probably picked on him because you tried to win alone. But school officials will respond to a united effort. Many parents in our group have experienced your pain.

It's time we united to put an end to this.

COMMENT: I work two jobs, and the last time I took half a day off, it was a total waste of my time and energy. You people need to get your act together.

RESPONSE: This time you're working with a different group. Each of us has had bad experiences with groups before and each of us is determined not to let ours fail. I hope you do come out just so see that we know what we're doing. If time is a problem for you, give us whatever free time you have. We will be working very hard on behalf of your child and we need your ideas and support to keep us on the right track. Even if you can't make all the meetings, you can still be involved and help us reach parents who have the time to contribute.

COMMENT: There's nothing I can do. I wish I could help, but I can't.

RESPONSE: There's much you can do. You can give us incentive just by coming out once in a while to show us you are behind us. We're building a powerful parent unit, and every individual can contribute.

COMMENT: I put all my energies into the school community when my children were in elementary school. They're in high school now, and I just don't see the need for as much involvement.

RESPONSE: But if we're really concerned about the future of our schools and our community, we must put forth the effort to resolve the many problems that still exist. The newer parent leaders coming up need your wisdom and guidance in developing the strategy to be effective.

As you succeed in turning apathetic parents into supporters and supporters into workers, see to it that your group makes room for their talents and capabilities. If you have sub-groups or committees in your organization, make sure they get a chance to sit on the committees of their choice. This will spark motivation and enhance their desire to make a meaningful contribution to the group.

KNOWING THAT YOUR GROUP WORKS

The best way to motivate people to work with and for your group is to see that the process of human interaction is a healthy one. Here are ten signs of group effectiveness:

(1) **Well planned goals:** All the workers in your group should be consulted when you're establishing goals. If *you* define their objectives for them, they're less likely to be interested.

Be sure to keep enthusiasm high by defining goals clearly. Unrealistic or ambiguous goals can confuse people and create frustration. Such a goal, for example, as "promoting quality education" is much too vague to galvanize anyone's enthusiasm. It's best to have specific indications or measures. Well-planned goals can keep your group motivated by making success more attainable and minimizing the frustration that results when you fall short of unrealistic and poorly set goals.*

(2) **Communication:** In a setting where individuals don't talk over their problems, or where they fail to listen to what others have to say, motivation suffers. You can encourage group motivation and leadership development by strengthening the lines of communication. We've already referred to family-hood sessions in which members can air their true feelings about the group. Be sure to plan such sessions periodically. Listening exercises in which members can practice following a line of thought in others and hearing others out without interruption is another way of developing communications, understanding and dialogue. Set an example by being open, honest and willing to listen yourself.

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*See also *Parents Organizing To Improve The Schools* for more information on meeting goals and priorities.

Since your group's success depends on your ability to communicate with school officials, you can keep others motivated by improving this ability in them. You'll defeat your purposes if you aren't clear when stating demands. When thoughts are clear, they can better be passed on to others. This is true of non-verbal as well as verbal communication. Don't allow a smile to camouflage a "no." In dealing with officials, don't let yourself be tricked by evasive words like "sometime" and "improving." Press for specifics. Be sure your group stays focused: confusion and poor communication can defeat you. It takes very little to promote understanding and yet others are motivated so much more when communication and understanding are present.

(3) **Use of Potential Group Power:** Your members feel more motivated when they feel a sense of power. Periodically, ask yourself the following questions:

(a) How is my group identified by the school and business community? (Weak? Scattered? A force to be reckoned with? A group of busybodies?)
(b) Why?
(c) Has our track record of winning improved?
(d) Why?
(e) Has our support increased?
(f) Why?

If members are persuaded to analyze and evaluate as they go along, they'll feel better about the group's accomplishments and its potentials.

Give your members a sense of power by teaching them to use the power they already have. If you know the school superintendent needs your signature or group endorsement for a special program, refuse to give it until some of *your* concerns are addressed. You can do a great deal to sustain momentum by letting members know they *do* have influence. It doesn't hurt to let politicians know that, too.

(4) **Use of Resources:** You'll find success easier to come by and motivation easier to maintain when you make effective use of your resources—both inside the group and outside it.

As people come into your group, ask them to tell you what contributions they can make. Find out their connections, their expertise, their abilities. People are flattered when their abilities are recognized and put to use.

If your group is dominated by a self-centered leader, a responsibility hoarder or an informationalist, do not despair. They *do* bring important resources to the group. Make the most of their strong commitment and sense of responsibility. If they find it difficult to develop others, then it's up to you to take on that task. Point out the long-term detriments of their leadership style and, as often as you feel it necessary, have each member suggest ideas for keeping all the work and all the responsibility from falling on the shoulders of one or two people.

Whenever you work as a *group* to develop strategy, define limitations and set priorities, each member's ability to keep the group focused is being used effectively. When every worker contributes her unique abilities for problem solving, an essential system of checks and balances develops. The group is now clicking on all cylinders.

Be sure you always tap the least expensive means of getting supplies, resources and information. Spend money wisely and make all members feel good about organizational thrift and efficiency. Share group responsibility for attending conferences and workshops and putting the knowledge gained there to the most productive use. This will also add to the purpose individuals feel they possess in giving the group its life energy.

(5) **Cohesion:** Group cohesion promotes group loyalty. If you've worked to eliminate jealousy and competition, if responsibilities are defined and delineated, you should be working as a cohesive unit. In assessing whether or not you are, there are two questions to ask: what brought our group together? What could tear us apart? If you have too many answers for the second question, a third is in order: "Am I impeding our group progress? How?"

Competition can also be avoided if your group is cohesive. If competition threatens your group, it's

time to [illegible] an open session to discuss the problem. The warning signs of competition are easy to spot:

(1) Refusal to acknowledge other's deeds and accomplishments;
(2) An aloof and distant attitude among the members;
(3) Little eye-to-eye contact—people not quite looking at one another;
(4) An inability of the members to listen to one another.

(6) **Morale:** Morale is made up of several things:

- The individual's attitude towards her function within the group;
- A sense of common purpose;
- The state of well-being associated with purpose and confidence.

Strong morale creates high motivation. To build it, you have to put forth the effort to understand all your members and to make everyone feel at ease. It is a good idea to establish a grievance procedure so that problems can be worked out before they have a chance to grow.

(7) **Innovation:** Get your group enthused and keep them motivated through originality and freshness. Do things differently! Try different meeting arrangements—bag lunch this week, potluck supper the next—or different meeting procedures. Learn from the experience of other groups and have fun adapting strategy to suit your composition and style. Involve your members in such activities as bowling, tennis, children's play day or fair, card games, etc.

(8) **Autonomy:** Independence is a must. Don't let people outside your group make your policy or plan your actions for you. Listen to their suggestions but always have the group weigh each alternative before a move is made. If yours is a school-based group, be careful not to let school officials dominate you or your meetings. Make your members realize that they have much of the expertise necessary to make good decisions in behalf of children.

(9) **Use of Time:** Good use of time helps plan successful actions and keeps members from getting

into a slump. You don't want to lose support, enthusiasm or motivation by wasting time. It's helpful to set time limits on agenda items so that conversations don't drag on endlessly. If you're having difficulty getting people to come to meetings on time, schedule important agenda items and key voting items early. If tardiness continues to be a problem, have a familyhood session to discuss the reasons and seek for possible solutions. Be sure you stress the importance of making time for major decisions so the group can avoid error.

(10) **Problem-Solving Adequacy:** Quite often parent groups don't resolve problems because from the outset they don't really believe they can. Many parents underestimate their own abilities and the abilities of other parents. But when it comes to children, many parents have untapped genius.

As you follow these tips, you'll uncover more and more hidden potential. Is Mrs. Smith still unmoved by group activity and reluctant to contribute? Have you done anything to build her confidence? Does she have to watch people fight before she can get in a word in group discussions? Has she been consulted on ways she can best help the group? Does she know she's respected and appreciated even though she prefers to grow by observation? How does she feel about people who dominate meetings? In developing and motivating others, you must make the effort to understand them.

RATE YOURSELF—WHAT LEADERSHIP TRAITS DO YOU HAVE?

Now that you know what leadership is—and isn't—you should be well on the road to developing a stronger, more effective parent group. Leadership development DOES take time. The quiz that follows will help you measure your ability. Give yourself five points for each "always," three points for each "sometimes," and zero for each "never." Take the quiz now and again in six months. See if you can't constantly improve your score, and your leadership ability by making notes and concentrating on developing areas where you are weakest.

Remember, leaders make people most effective—and people give groups meaning and duration. It takes a lot of effort to make schools work for children, but if you weren't ready for the challenge, you wouldn't have picked up this booklet in the first place. GOOD LUCK!

DEVELOPING MY LEADERSHIP TALENT

PART I—REACTING TO OTHERS:

CHECK ✓ ONE:

Always	Some times	Never	
☐	☐	☐	(1) I believe in the capabilities of others—even when there is little evidence of what they can do.
☐	☐	☐	(2) I attempt to understand others, especially when there's a difference of opinion.
☐	☐	☐	(3) I don't ignore the concerns of others even when they're completely different from mine.
☐	☐	☐	(4) I'm careful to avoid bragging about *my* accomplishments for the group.
☐	☐	☐	(5) I promote expression by everyone.
☐	☐	☐	(6) I accept criticism without wanting to get even with the other person for feeling that way.
☐	☐	☐	(7) I recognize the value each person gives to her role.
☐	☐	☐	(8) I listen, learn and take orders from those who have more expertise than I have in a given area.
☐	☐	☐	(9) I don't allow prejudices (class, race, age, sex) to keep me from working with people for a group cause.
☐	☐	☐	(10) I have an attitude which allows me to be flexible with others.
☐	☐	☐	(11) I care how my actions or deeds affect others.
☐	☐	☐	(12) I'm not afraid to be corrected.
☐	☐	☐	(13) I avoid making excuses for myself when criticized.
☐	☐	☐	(14) I acknowledge individual effort—no matter how small—both privately and publicly.
☐	☐	☐	(15) I inform others of their good contributions before attacking what they haven't done.
☐	☐	☐	(16) I contribute to an atmosphere where human factors and feelings are considered legitimate.

PART I—REACTING TO OTHERS: (Continued)

CHECK ✓ ONE:

Always	Some times	Never	
☐	☐	☐	(17) I am honest in sharing my feelings, even those feelings others may not care to hear.
☐	☐	☐	(18) I am careful not to confuse people by using words they can't understand.
☐	☐	☐	(19) I look people in the eye when communicating.
☐	☐	☐	(20) I hear people out rather than anticipate responses.
☐	☐	☐	(21) I listen attentively when others are talking to me.
☐	☐	☐	(22) I listen to what I can't hear by watching for non-verbal cues (i.e., discomfort, frustration, happiness, gestures).
☐	☐	☐	(23) I make certain the other party is being clear—even if that means repeated questioning.
☐	☐	☐	(24) I initiate discussions with people with whom I disagree so we can work in better harmony.

PART II—DOING THE JOB

CHECK ✓ ONE:

Always	Some times	Never	
☐	☐	☐	(1) I serve as an example by operating as a democratic leader.
☐	☐	☐	(2) I share the knowledge I receive with members of my group.
☐	☐	☐	(3) I don't let one or two people disrupt the group process.
☐	☐	☐	(4) I work hard to keep conflict at a mimimum—even when some people deserve abuse
☐	☐	☐	(5) I accept my responsibilities without complaining.
☐	☐	☐	(6) I concentrate on developing others as much as I do myself.
☐	☐	☐	(7) I make use of all of the human resources in my group.
☐	☐	☐	(8) I get the group to complete tasks that we've begun.
☐	☐	☐	(9) I keep promises made to others—even little ones.

☐ ☐ ☐ (10) I'm careful not to dominate group discussions with my personal feelings.

☐ ☐ ☐ (11) I am committed to achieving success for my group even when the members make me angry.

☐ ☐ ☐ (12) I make attempts to improve our timing and relationships with school officials.

☐ ☐ ☐ (13) I'm not hung up on a title.

☐ ☐ ☐ (14) I want to do as much as possible—even when I'm not acknowledged or rewarded.

☐ ☐ ☐ (15) I'm prepared to deal with frustrating situations that block group progress.

☐ ☐ ☐ (16) I am careful to involve everyone in goal setting and action planning.

☐ ☐ ☐ (17) I seek to make my contribution to the group more meaningful by expanding my base of knowledge about school matters.

☐ ☐ ☐ (18) I keep members feeling they *will* make a difference during defeats, setbacks or lulls in our progress.

☐ ☐ ☐ (19) I work extra hard to improve competence by providing more incentives to group members.

☐ ☐ ☐ (20) I look for warning signs of group deterioration brought on by selfish personalities.

☐ ☐ ☐ (21) I help my group stay focused on the subject being discussed.

☐ ☐ ☐ (22) I use the concept of leadership as a guiding force in bringing about change.

☐ ☐ ☐ (23) I develop strategy with my workers for more person-to-person contact with those who don't come to meetings.

☐ ☐ ☐ (24) I am careful not to make parents who are less involved or knowledgeable feel inferior.

☐ ☐ ☐ (25) I am careful to keep my group focussed on the community we serve, even if we achieve prominence as individuals in our city and state.

☐ ☐ ☐ (26) I help my members and parents in the community to improve schools by defining and accepting their responsibility as parents.

☐ ☐ ☐ (27) I seek out information from other groups on ways to tackle local and state problems.

YOUR SCORE—WHAT KIND OF LEADER ARE YOU?

175-225 Excellent, admirable leader. Your group should be progressive and definitely on the right track. You *are* developing others, right?

125-174 Good leadership performance. Work on your "nevers" and "sometimes." Ask yourself *when* you're most likely to do certain things. If it's only with people you like, you might as well score a "never."

75-124 Fair leadership ability. You need to sit down with others to discuss your contribution to the group. Work extra hard to make "sometimes" "always" when it's going to benefit you and others.

25-74 Poor leadership—your group is no doubt suffering. Go back over this handbook, read other resources and brainstorm your shortcomings with others.

Below 25 What have you been doing in your group? I can't believe you are really a parent who wants some success.

OTHER BOOKS ON LEADERSHIP AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

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CITIZENS' TRAINING INSTITUTE

The Citizens' Training Institute—CTI—was created in the summer of 1975. CTI makes contact with parents and other citizens throughout the nation who need skills to organize and take action to improve their schools.

Here is what CTI tries to do through a series of three and four-day institutes:

- Help parents and other citizens understand what makes the schools run—how the system works (or doesn't work).
- Develop parent-leaders who know how to organize parents and other citizens to work for better schools.
- Provide opportunities for parents and other citizens to share good ideas, concerns, and plans of action.
- Provide written materials on a wide range of topics of interest to parents. And the assistance started at the institute continues for at least a year after parents first learn the skills!

Each institute is tailor-made for its audience.

How do we do it?

Two months before the institute is scheduled, CTI staff members meet with people from groups in the cities and towns to be served by the institute.

Parents and other citizens at these meetings tell us what their groups are trying to do and what problems they're having doing it.

AFTER THE INSTITUTE, THEN WHAT?

CTI believes that what happens after an institute is as important as what happens during it.

Regional field staff members work with groups after an institute to help them put to good use the skills and information learned. People who attend an institute are later questioned about the progress they are making in doing those things they want to do.

A series of slide/tape presentations based on the Citizens' Training Institute is available to rent or purchase. These brief presentations (12-15 minutes) can be used by those who attend an institute and want to carry back the message to their groups.

See page 58 and 59 for description of tapes.

THE PARENTS' NETWORK

Local and statewide citizen-parent groups can work with NCCE by joining *The Parents' Network*.

- *Membership*—Participating groups automatically receive all names of callers in their area from 800-NET-WORK, NCCE's nationwide toll-free telephone hotline. By dialing 800-NET-WORK parents and citizens anywhere in the continental United States (except in Maryland) can get information about *The Parents' Network*.
- *Research*—With the help of *The Parents' Network*, NCCE prepares and distributes materials to help parents.
- *Information*—NCCE is publishing a joint newspaper with *The Parents' Network*, featuring news of local groups and exchanging information.

The cost for group affiliation ranges from $15—$50 per year, depending upon the size of the local group and pro-rated at 10cper paying member.

SERVICES OF NCCE AND THE PARENTS' NETWORK

- Referral: Concerned parents to legal counsel; organizations to other organizations; individuals to organizations; parent groups to appropriate educators; legislative inquiries to appropriate sources of information.
- Materials: Produce manuals, pamphlets and research documents useful to citizens in dealing with their schools and useful to parents in understanding the educational system.
- Research: Prepare background information for the press and for legislators who request it.
- Public information: Clarify school issues and provide information to the national press.
- Representation: Act as a national clearinghouse and when asked will on occasion act as spokesman for local parent organizations.
- Legal: Join as a "friend of the court" in lawsuits that have national consequences for the rights of students and parents.
- Training in the Citizens' Training Institute.
- Service to individuals: Support services to groups and individuals to establish new organizations in cities where no parent-citizen voice currently is heard.

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INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

There is much to be done to improve the quality of public schools. Parents can bring about many changes. Join us today. $15 annual fee.

- 45,000,000 children in U.S. public schools.
- Over 16,000 school districts.
- Approximately 90,000 school buildings.

NAME _____ (please print)

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Suite 410, Wilde Lake Village Green
Columbia, Maryland 21046

GROUP MEMBERSHIP

One of the important things to know about trying to improve the quality of schools is that one parent trying it alone runs a high risk of failing. Frustration, uncertainty, confusion and exhaustion will soon set in. Think about forming a group or if you are already in a group, there is even greater strength in groups joining together. You will increase your chances of success if you do. Join NCCE's rapidly growing PARENTS NETWORK of over 225 groups involving 80,000 parents.

The cost for group affiliation ranges from $15 to $50 per year, depending upon the size of the local group, prorated at 10¢ per paying member.

NAME OF GROUP _____ (please print)

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

(Name of person to contact if address is different from above)

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

MAIL TODAY TO:

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Suite 410, Wilde Lake Village Green
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AVAILABLE PUBLICATIONS OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR CITIZENS IN EDUCATION

AVAILABLE HANDBOOKS

(For detailed description, see inside back cover)

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1. **DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP FOR PARENT/CITIZEN GROUPS**
   (60 pages) / **Price $1.75**
2. **FUND RAISING BY PARENT/CITIZEN GROUPS**
   (52 pages) / **Price $1.75**
3. **PARENTS ORGANIZING TO IMPROVE SCHOOLS**
   (52 pages) / **Price $1.50**
4. **PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**
   (Paperback, 271 pages) / **Price $5** *reduced price of $3 to members*
5. **VIOLENCE IN OUR SCHOOLS: WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT IT—WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT**
   (52 pages) / **Price $1.25**
6. **THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION: CHALLENGES TO STATE BOARD LEADERSHIP**
   (94 pages) / **Price $3.50**
7. **FITS AND MISFITS: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING MATERIALS**
   Price $1.50
8. **NETWORK**
   Price $8

SLIDE-TAPES FOR RENT

NCCE and The Citizen Training Institute have produced a series of 6 slide-tapes presentations, five of them based on citizen training institutes and each running 12 to 15 minutes. The sixth is about the general goals and activities of NCCE and runs just over 8 minutes.

The series may be rented for two weeks at a cost of $7 to cover handling and postage. The series also may be purchased for $155.

Description of the 6 slide-tapes presentations follow:

ITEM

9. **WHAT IS NCCE?**
   (Illustrates the various activities of The National Committee For Citizens in Education. NCCE officials describe the organization's philosophy and purpose.)
10. **HOW TO WORK WITH SCHOOL OFFICIALS.**
    (Illustrates how to develop strategy for action, gather facts and make the parents' case to school officials.)

11. **FUND RAISING.**
(Illustrates how to seek and obtain money from individuals, foundations, and other sources of funds.)

12. **ORGANIZING PARENTS AND DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP.**
(Illustrates how to build a power base among parents and other citizens, run an organization, and develop effective leaders.)

13. **PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING.**
(Illustrates how collective bargaining process works and how parents can make their voice heard before, during, and after negotiation.)

14. **THE LAW AND PARENTS' RIGHTS.**
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FUND RAISING BY PARENT/CITIZEN GROUPS—A fundamental, step-by-step guide to fund raising activities. Takes you through the basics, from identifying sources of support to the development of a fund raising plan, how to handle follow-up, how to cultivate donors. This information-packed publication includes sample proposals, suggestions on how to form a tax-exempt organization and tips on how to report back to donors.—(*52 pages*; $1.75—*single copy free to members.*)

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THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION: CHALLENGES TO STATE BOARD LEADERSHIP—The shifting centers of power and responsibility in American education and their consequences for state politics in education.—(*94 pages*; $3.50—*single copy free to members.*)

FITS AND MISFITS: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING MATERIALS—Booklet produced in cooperation with The Educational Products Information Exchange. Contains answers to some questions about the selection of materials used in the schools, i.e., Who chooses those materials? On what basis? Through what procedures?—($1.50—*single copy free to members.*)

NETWORK—A national school-year newspaper for parents. (*Subscriptions* $8.00 **a year**, *free to members.*)

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